Physical Fitness

To stay physically fit, you need to participate in activities that do three basic things: Get your heart and lungs pumping (aerobic); keep your body limber (flexibility); and tone your muscles (strength). The following table shows how different exercises rate in these three areas.

	Aerobic	Flexibility	Strength
Aerobic dance	High	Medium	High
Biking	High	Low	Medium
Running	High	Low	Medium
Swimming	High	Medium	Medium
Tennis	Medium	Low	Medium
Walking	Medium	Low	Medium
Weight lifting	Low	Medium	High
Yoga	Low	High	Medium

Why is physical fitness important?

People who get regular exercise (about 30 minutes of moderate physical activity, 4-6 days a week) experience the following benefits:

- **Feeling better:** You have more energy, feel less tired, and it helps you cope with stress.
- **Looking better:** Regular physical activity helps control your appetite, tones your muscles, and lowers your body fat, all of which can improve your appearance.
- **Improved health:** Keeping fit can help you prevent coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, and osteoporosis. It can also help manage diabetes and depression.

How do I start a physical fitness program?

You should consult your doctor before beginning any exercise program. Consider the following points as well:

- **Choose an exercise routine that's right for you.** Ask yourself the following questions: Do I enjoy this activity? Does this activity fit into my schedule and is it convenient? Do I need any special clothing or equipment to participate in this activity?
- **Vary your routine.** Switch between several different types of exercise. This gives you a balanced fitness program and keeps you from getting bored with your workout.
- **Don't push yourself too hard.** Start slowly and gradually lengthen your workout.
- **Find an exercise buddy.** Exercising with a friend is fun and can keep you motivated.